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TAGS: PREL EAID PHUM AU SU

SUBJECT: MEDIA AND ADVOCACY GROUPS HAVE DISTORTED OUR IMAGE, NAFIE TELLS REPRESENTATIVE ELLISON

Classified By: CDA Robert E. Whitehead, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: The GOS is satisfied with bilateral engagement under the Obama administration, but it needs Congress to overcome "bias" against the National Congress Party (NCP) regime, influential Presidential Advisor Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie told U.S. Representative Keith Ellison on August 5. Blaming the U.S. media, advocacy community and pro-Israel lobby for what he claimed was a distorted image of Darfur in particular and Sudan as a whole, Nafie then thanked Representative Ellison for the Congressman's willingness to observe the situation in Sudan firsthand. Nafie said he encouraged other members of Congress to do the same. Rep. Ellison promised to relay this message to his colleagues, noting that Congress is deeply concerned about implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and humanitarian conditions in Darfur. End Summary.

¶12. (C) Dr. Nafie praised the Obama administration's engagement with Sudan under Special Envoy Gration, emphasizing the GOS' strong desire for improved bilateral relations. He spoke at length about what he characterized as the NCP regime's image problem in Congress, noting that it was based on "distortions, misperceptions and negative stereotypes." He claimed that the characterization of the decades-long North-South war as an Arab versus African conflict was a false dichotomy perpetuated to elicit sympathy from the Congressional Black Caucus and advocacy groups. He lamented that these groups were complicating bilateral relations by offering "all sticks and no carrots." .

¶13. (C) Rep. Ellison responded by saying that the Black Caucus cares deeply about the welfare of Sudan as a whole and wanted to see the nation prosper. He emphasized that the U.S. Congress is deeply concerned about implementation of the CPA and the alleviation of human suffering in Darfur. Nafie acknowledged some challenges on both fronts, but argued that the NCP was being unfairly targeted for criticism. "If you take a critical look into CPA implementation from unbiased sources such as the (donor-led) Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC), you will be able to see where we fell short but also where the SPLM (Note: Sudan People's Liberation Movement. End Note) fell short," he said. Similarly on Darfur, Nafie asserted that assessments from the United Nations/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) painted a much different picture from the image he claimed was being perpetuated by the advocacy community.

¶14. (C) Presidential Advisor and NCP Foreign Relations \*Secretary\* Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail also addressed Rep.

Ellison about perceived contradictions in USG policy and goals. "You ask for our help in counterterrorism, but you keep us on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list," he said. "You say you want humanitarian relief, but your sanctions are hindering our ability to provide it and crippling our economy." He expressed hope that Congressman Ellison's visit would pave the way for more visitors from Congress and eliminate what he argued was bias against the NCP. "If I had to sum up in one word what we want from the U.S., it is fairness," he said.

¶ 5. (C) Comment: Nafie is the leading proponent of the NCP hardline view that the U.S. emphasis on humanitarian issues is inappropriate and not relevant to the dialogue on improving bilateral relations. Nonetheless his tone has softened significantly over the past several months, demonstrating a broader NCP buy-in to U.S. engagement. Nafie is unlikely to change his unyielding views, but engagement with him and other hardliners can be helpful in terms of strengthening humanitarian outreach in Darfur and implementation of the CPA.

WHITEHEAD